US006450143B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Hegemier et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 6,450,143 B1**

(45) **Date of Patent: *Sep. 17, 2002**

(54) **HEAVY-DUTY VALVE STEM SEAL ASSEMBLY**

(75) Inventors: **Timothy Alan Hegemier**; **Mark Allen Stamback**, both of Avilla, IN (US)

(73) Assignee: **Dana Corporation**, Toledo, OH (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/859,926**

(22) Filed: **May 17, 2001**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 09/552,447, filed on Apr. 18, 2000, now Pat. No. 6,244,235, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 09/395,579, filed on Sep. 14, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,209,504.

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **F02N 3/00**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **123/188.6**

(58) **Field of Search** 123/188.6

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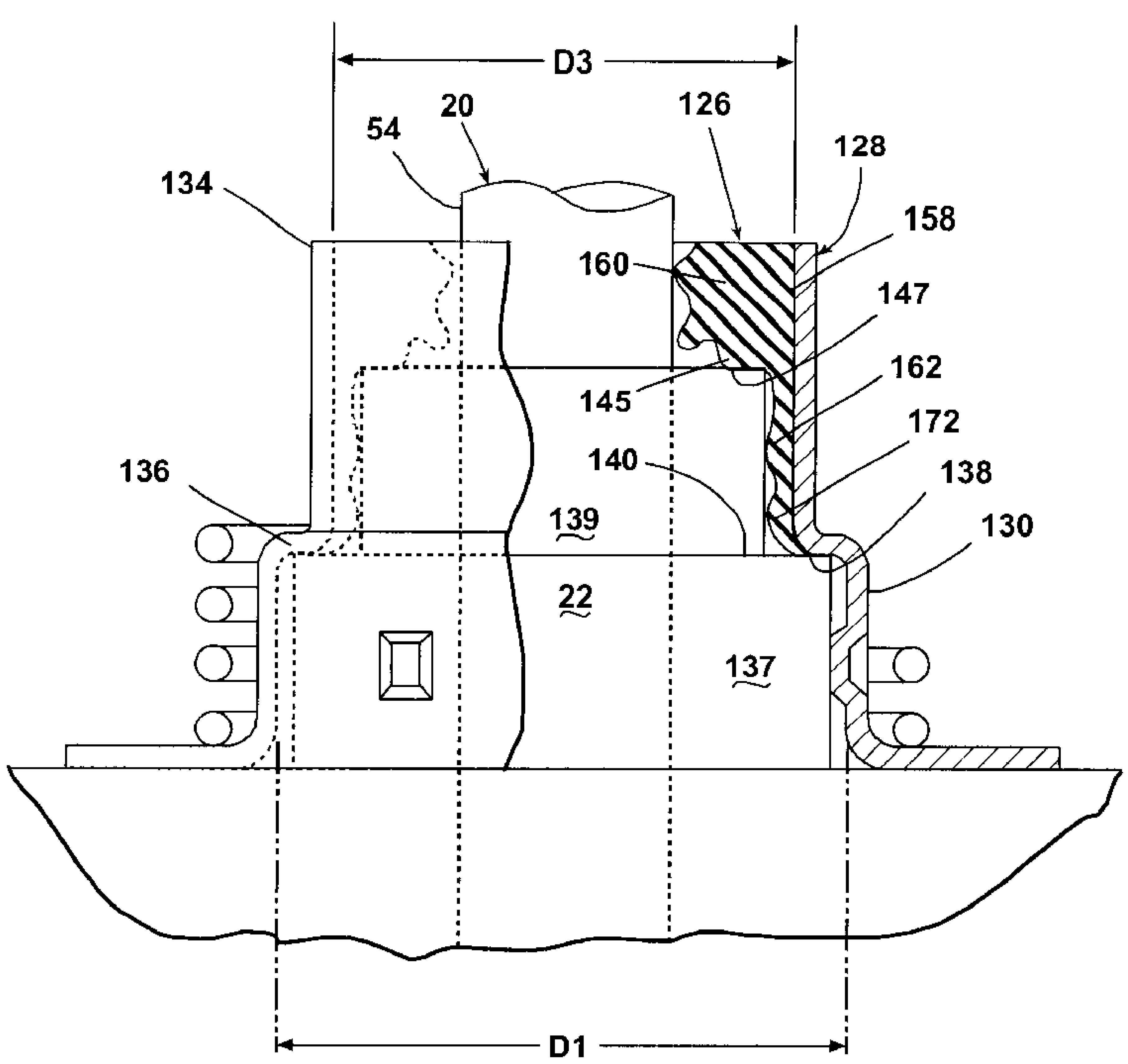
Primary Examiner—Noah P. Kamen

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Rader, Fishman & Grauer PLLC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An integral valve stem seal retainer and spring seat for a valve seal subassembly is disclosed having lower and upper portions. An annular sealing member engages the upper portions of the metal retainer and an annular flange extends radially outwardly of the lower portion of the retainer to engage at least one coil of a valve spring. The annular sealing member further includes upper and lower portions, wherein the upper portion engages an outer surface of a valve stem while the lower portion engages a transitional surface of a valve guide.

16 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



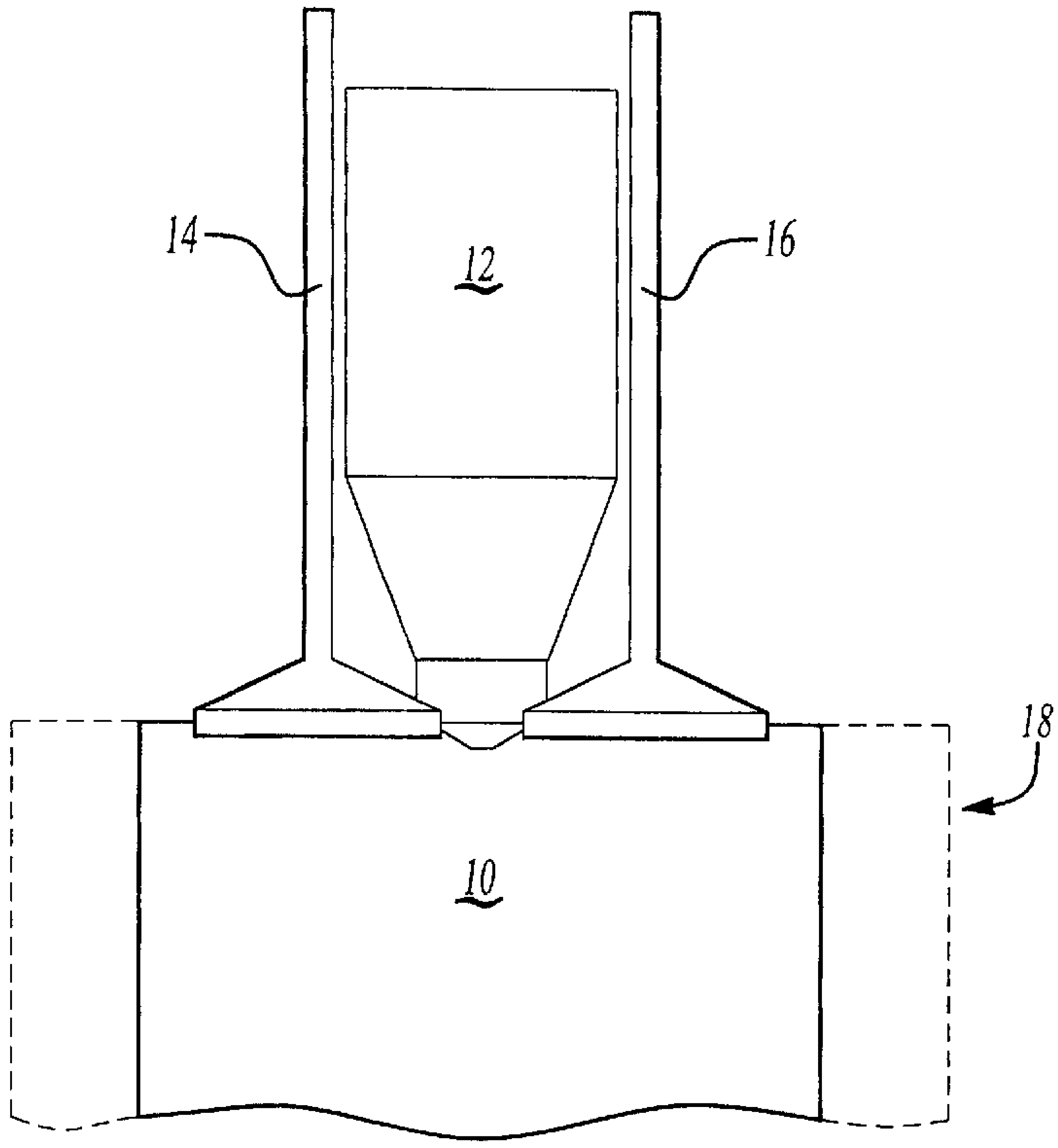


Fig-1

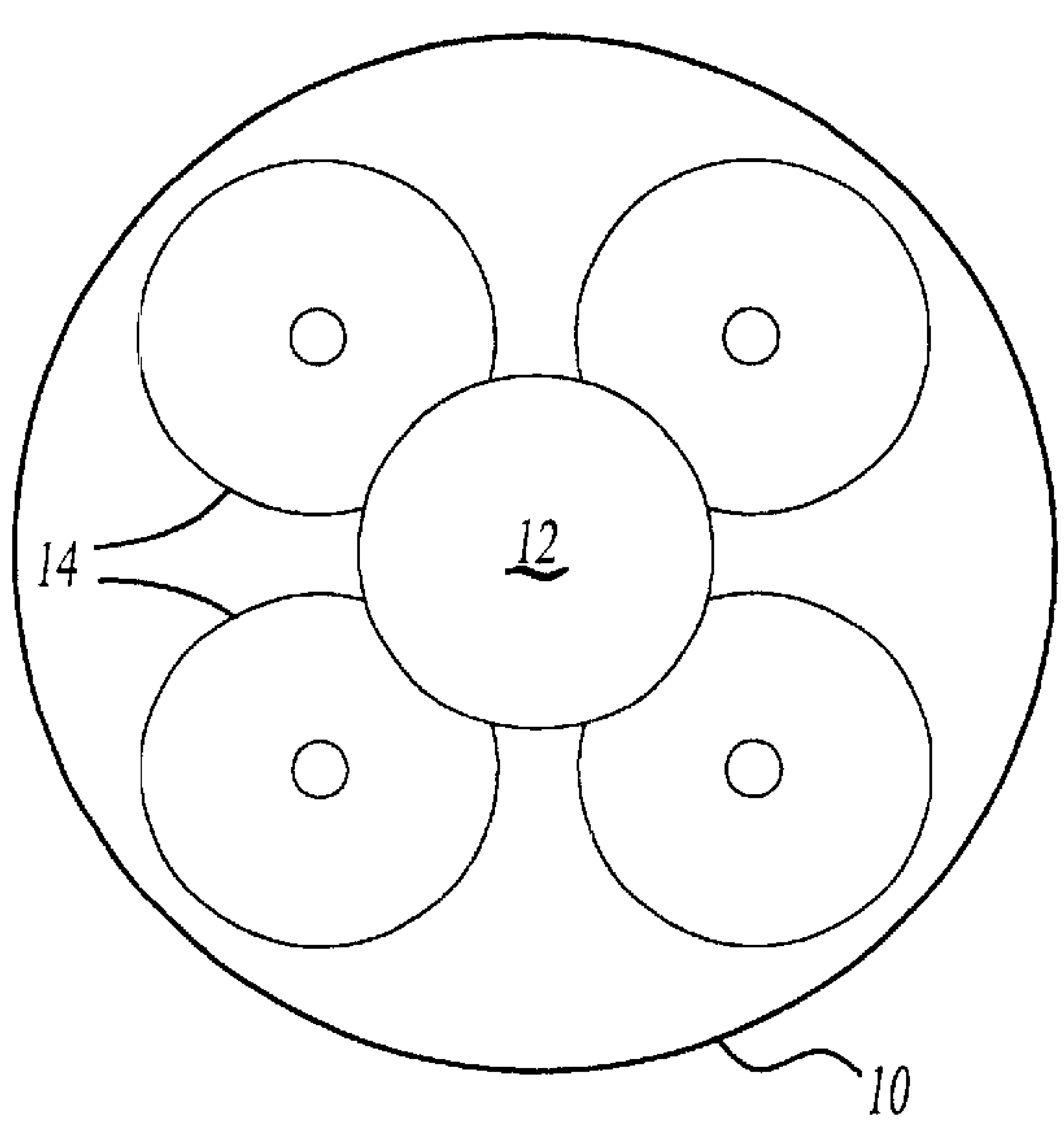


Fig-2

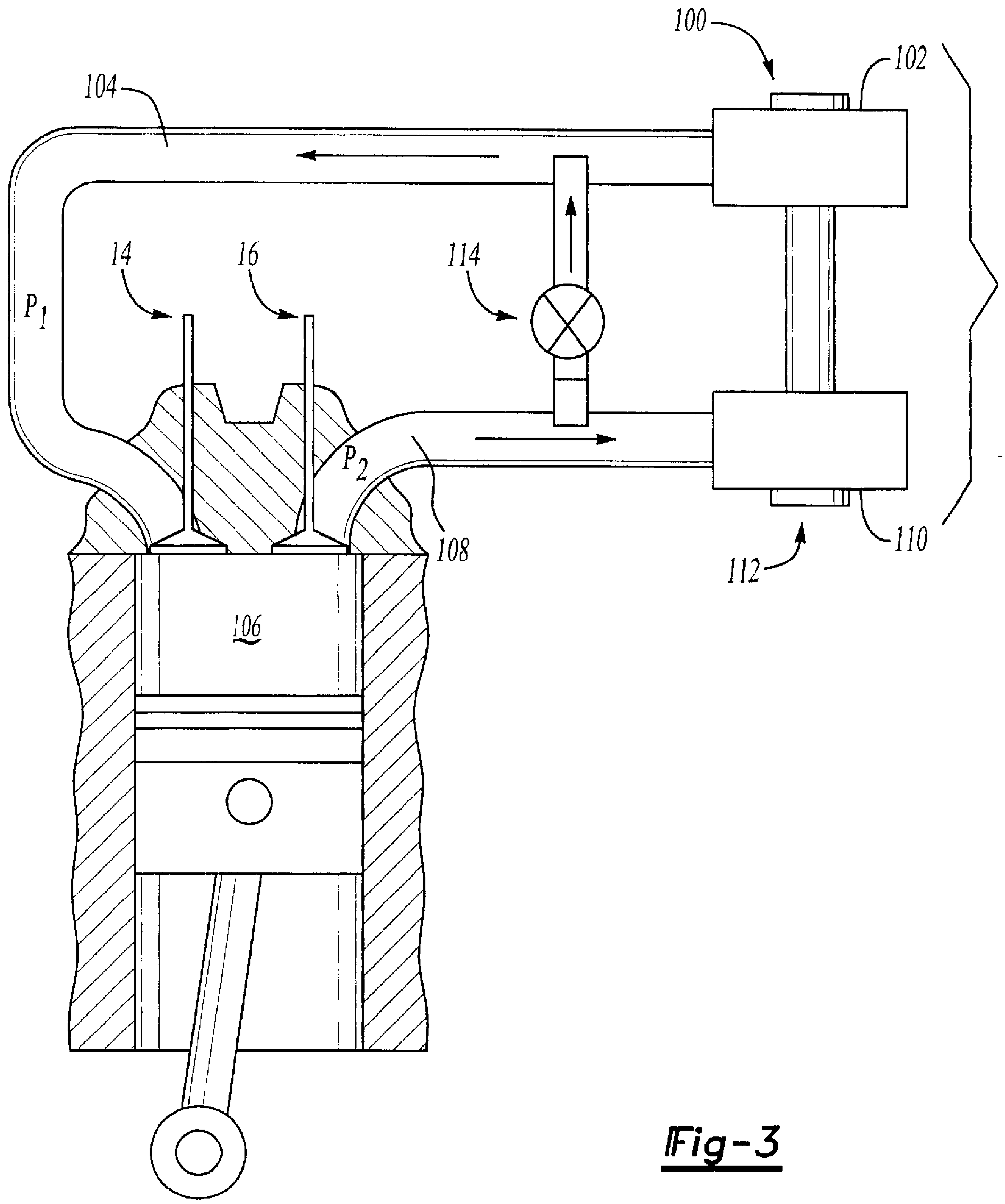
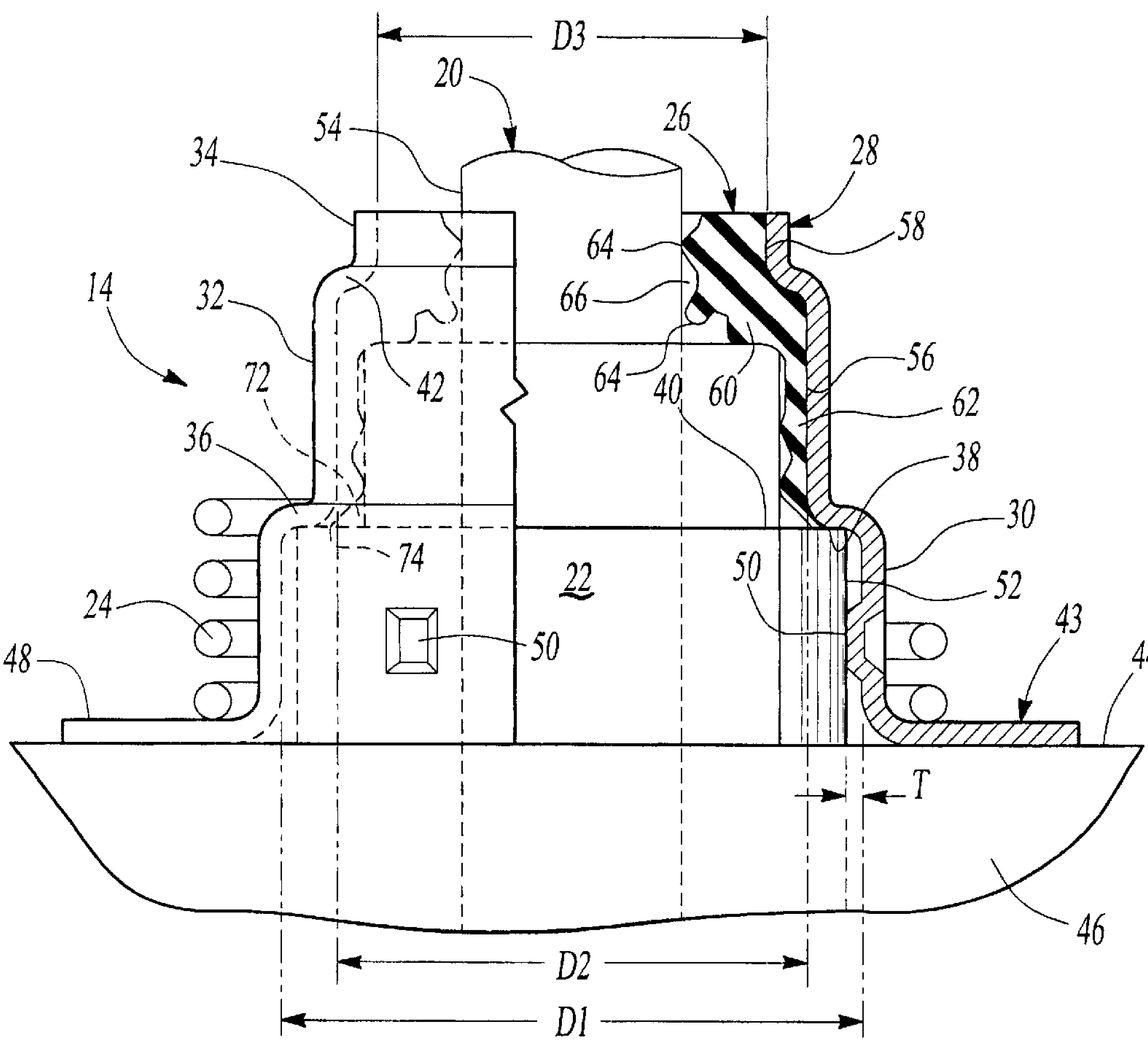


Fig-3


D3
20
26
28
54
34
58
64
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14
32
56
64
40
60
62
42
72
38
36
30
74
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50
52
24
43
50
48
44
T
46
D2
D1

Fig-4

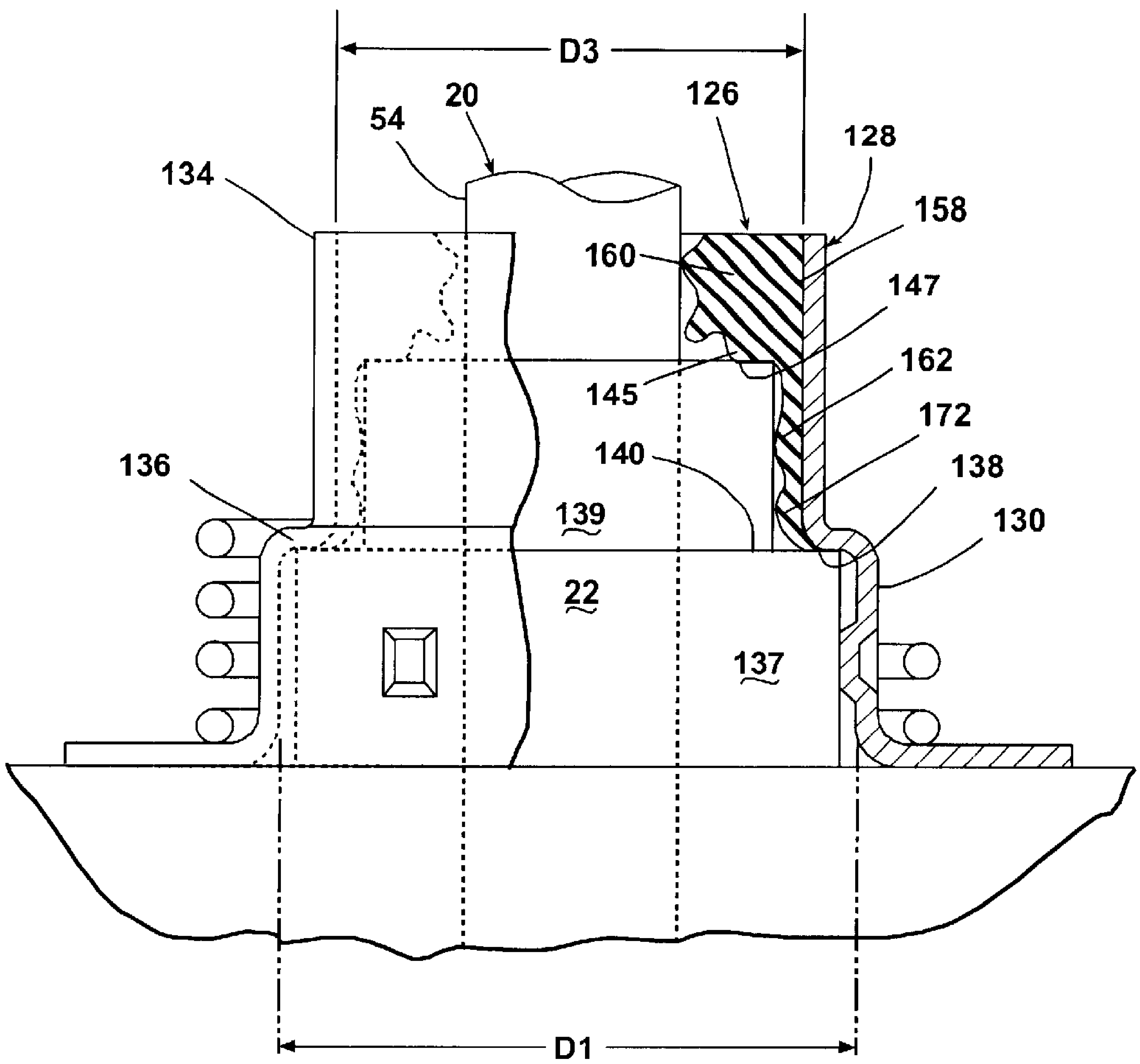
D3
20
54
126
128
134
158
160
147
162
145
172
136
140
138
130
139
22
137
D1

Fig. 5

HEAVY-DUTY VALVE STEM SEAL ASSEMBLY

The present application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/522,447, filed Apr. 18, 2000, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,244,235, issued Jun. 12, 2001, which in turn is related to U.S. application Ser. No. 09/395,579, filed Sep. 14, 1999, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,209,504, issued Apr. 3, 2001, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to internal combustion engine valve seals and retainers, and more particularly to a unitary annular retainer including an integral spring seat where the retainer provides support to an entire outer circumference of a valve stem seal.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In conventional overhead valve, internal combustion engines, at least two valves reciprocate to provide intermittent communication between intake and exhaust manifolds and a combustion chamber. The valves include valve stems that are commonly disposed in valve stem guides, supporting axial motion in an engine component such as an engine head. Lubrication is provided to upper portions of the valve stems by a spray of lubricating oil within a valve cover disposed over the engine head or by gravity flow from an associated rocker arm. Oil flows along a free upper end of the valve stem toward the manifolds and valve heads by the force of gravity and may be encouraged by a pressure differential in the manifold versus crankcase pressure.

Annular valve stem seals are generally urged into contact with the outer surface of the valve stem and an upper portion of the valve guide by a valve stem seal retainer, and serve various purposes. First, valve stem seals minimize engine oil consumption by restricting oil entry into the manifold and the combustion chamber. Second, they help to minimize exhaust particulates that contribute to pollution. Third, they are helpful in minimizing guide wear, which is of particular importance in large diesel engines due to the nature of their operation. The valve stem, valve guide, and valve stem seals are annularly wrapped by a helical compression valve spring that serves to bias the valve into a closed position. The longitudinal ends of the valve spring are restrained by flanges on corresponding valve spring retainers and/or spring seats, thereby maintaining proper alignment and position of the valve and valve spring.

In the heavy-duty engine market, a number of changes are being made to comply with recent and prospective emissions standards. As the construction of the engine changes, engine designers must nevertheless maintain a robust engine design with a sufficient level of dependability. One of the more prominent changes being implemented is the increase of the power rating of the engine in an effort to reduce the size of the engine. In particular, engine manufacturers are attempting to reduce the displacement of heavy-duty engines while still providing ample horsepower and torque for heavy-duty applications. As is well-known, engine displacement is calculated by multiplying cylinder bore area times the piston stroke length. In reducing the displacement of heavy-duty engines, manufacturers are reducing both the bore area and the stroke length while increasing the compression within the combustion chamber. Increasing the required amount of compression, in turn, places greater stress on the valve seal. Many of these engines are increasing their compression by up to 50–60 psig, which is a far greater pressure than many

prior art valve seals can handle while being properly retained on a valve guide. For such cases, an integral valve seal with a metal retainer is normally recommended.

However, as the bore area of an engine is reduced, the area provided for valve assemblies above a combustion chamber is correspondingly reduced. The problem is especially significant in heavy-duty diesel engines because all valve assemblies are typically oriented perpendicular to the engine head. Additionally, a fuel injector occupies a large portion of the area above the cylinder bore. Thus, in high efficiency heavy-duty diesel engines having more than two valves (intake and exhaust valves) per cylinder, the area directly above the engine bore must be shared by a fuel injector and the valves. Since the size of the fuel injector is substantially fixed, a reduction in engine bore generally requires a reduction in the valve assembly diameter, including corresponding reductions in the diameter of valve stem seals, valve guides, and valve stem seal retainers. There is thus a need for a valve seal assembly capable of withstanding increased compression loads while providing a seal having close clearance and durability.

Another way manufacturers are attempting to comply with recent and prospective emissions standards is by turbocharging heavy-duty diesel engines while also incorporating exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) to reduce emissions. In typical turbocharged, unthrottled (i.e. diesel) engines that do not have EGR, the intake manifold pressure is slightly higher than the exhaust manifold pressure. Thus, if the valve stem seal is strong enough to withstand the intake manifold pressure, it will also withstand the lower exhaust manifold pressure. However, once EGR is incorporated, a portion of the exhaust gases are injected back into the intake manifold at a point downstream of the turbocharger compressor. To effectively inject exhaust gases into the intake manifold, the exhaust manifold pressure must exceed the intake manifold pressure. In one design, the exhaust manifold pressure must be 75–100 percent higher than the intake manifold pressure to achieve the desired level of exhaust gas recirculation. However, it has been found that prior art integral valve seal designs are insufficiently supported by the metal retainer to operate in high pressure environments. In particular, such a dramatic increase in exhaust manifold pressure has caused "bursting" of the valve seal in experimental turbocharged unthrottled engine designs using EGR, resulting in loss of compression and seal integrity. Thus, a reinforced integral valve seal assembly is desired that is capable of withstanding increased compression loads while also providing a seal having close clearance and durability to minimize the possibility of valve seal failure in high pressure environments.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an integral valve stem seal and valve stem seal retainer designed to withstand high manifold pressures. The retainer includes concentric lower and upper portions, where the portions are separated by diameter-reducing transition zone. As a result, the upper portion has an inside diameter less than the lower portion. An elastomeric annular sealing member engages the upper portion of the metal retainer such that the entire outside circumference of the sealing member is reinforced by the retainer. An annular flange extends radially outwardly of the lower portion of the retainer to engage at least one coil of a valve spring. The annular sealing member includes a plurality of oil or gas seals that engage an outer surface of a valve stem, and further includes a lower lip that engages an upper surface of a transition of a valve guide. The lower portion of the retainer may also include a plurality of radially inwardly extending tangs to positively engage an outer surface of the valve guide against axial and rotational movement.

Because the valve stem seal is reinforced along its entire outside circumference, the inventive seal is extremely strong and resistant to failure even though the outer diameter has been reduced to accommodate smaller, higher power-density engines. Moreover, since the reinforcement on the seal is provided by the upper retainer portion, which has the smallest inner diameter, the seal is extremely resistant to blow-out or "bursting". Thus, the seal of the present invention may be used in new, higher pressure heavy-duty engines to reduce the likelihood of valve stem seal failure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The features and inventive aspects of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading the following detailed description, claims, and drawings, of which the following is a brief description:

FIG. **1** is a side plan view of a cylinder bore of a heavy-duty high power density diesel engine.

FIG. **2** is a top plan view of a cylinder bore of a heavy-duty high power density diesel engine.

FIG. **3** is a diagrammatic view of a turbocharged unthrottled engine with exhaust gas recirculation.

FIG. **4** is a perspective view of one embodiment of the valve assembly of the present invention.

FIG. **5** is a perspective view of another embodiment of the valve assembly of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As noted above, reducing the displacement of heavy-duty engines causes a corresponding reduction in a cylinder bore area. In FIG. **1**, a side plan view of a reduced area cylinder bore **10** is shown. FIG. **1** also shows, in plan view, a fuel injector **12**, and two valves **14**, **16** corresponding respectively to intake and exhaust valves. As may be appreciated from FIG. **1**, the valves **14**, **16** extend generally perpendicular to the cross-sectional area of the cylinder bore **10**, and are not angled with respect to the combustion chamber. In comparison to a conventionally sized heavy-duty engine cylinder bore, shown in phantom as reference **18**, the reduced area bore **10** provides substantially less area above the bore **10** for placement of both the fuel injector **12** and the valves **14**, **16**.

The space constraints associated with heavy-duty high power density engines are further illustrated with reference to FIG. **2**, which shows the reduced diameter bore **10** from the top. In FIG. **2**, the fuel injector **12** shares the area directly above the cylinder bore **10** with two pairs of valve assemblies **14**, **16** (two intake and two exhaust valves). Again, because the valve assemblies **14**, **16** and the fuel injector **12** extend generally perpendicular to the cross-sectional area of the cylinder bore **10**, the area allowed for each valve assembly **14**, **16** is severely constrained. As may be appreciated, it is not practical to reduce the size of the fuel injector **12**. To enable the four valve assemblies **14**, **16** and the fuel injector **12** to fit within the allocated space above each cylinder bore **10**, the corresponding cross-sectional area of the valve assemblies **14**, **16** must be reduced.

Additionally, some manufacturers have attempted to design a turbocharged unthrottled (i.e. diesel) engine including an exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) system, shown diagrammatically in FIG. **3**. In such an engine, air is drawn through an air intake **100** into a compressor **102** that feeds compressed air through an intake manifold **104** to an intake valve **14**. Air within intake manifold **104** is pressurized by the compressor to a first pressure P_1, typically on the order of 30 psi. After the intake air is mixed with fuel and burned within cylinder **106**, exhaust valve **16** opens to vent the exhaust gases from cylinder **106** into exhaust manifold **108**. A portion of the exhaust gases flow across turbine **110**, thereby driving compressor **102**, after which the gases are discharged through exhaust port **112**. However, to improve the efficiency of the engine while reducing emissions, an EGR system **114** may be used to inject a portion of the exhaust gases back into the intake manifold. Of course, to overcome the intake manifold pressure P_1, the pressure P_2 within exhaust manifold must be exceed P_1. In practice, the P_2 must be significantly higher than P_1, on the order of 75–100 percent higher, to achieve reduced emissions. Thus, if the intake manifold pressure is set at 30 psi, the exhaust manifold pressure must be between 50–60 psi to achieve the desired EGR level.

Typical valve seal assemblies have been unable to withstand the increased exhaust manifold pressure, and have been found to fail in test engines. One particularly harmful failure, called "bursting", involves the elastomeric valve stem seal failing along a radial path, generally at the radially thinnest point of the elastomeric seal. To combat seal bursting, a fully-supported valve stem seal assembly is disclosed.

A valve assembly, corresponding either to an intake valve **14** or an exhaust valve **16**, is shown in FIG. **4**. For purposes of the following description, the valve assembly in FIG. **4** will be referred to as an intake valve **14**, but it should be understood that the following description applies to exhaust valves as well.

In general, the components that most contribute to the cross-sectional area of the valve assembly **14** include a valve stem **20**, a valve guide **22**, and a valve spring **24**. In addition, the valve assembly further includes a valve stem seal **26** and a valve stem seal retainer **28**. When assembled, the valve stem **20** is seated in and surrounded by the annular valve guide **22**. In reducing the cross-sectional area of the valve assembly **14**, it is generally not possible to reduce the outer diameter of the valve stem **20** for structural reasons. Instead, reducing the outer diameter of both the valve guide **22** and the valve spring **24** achieves most of the cross-sectional area reduction. However, reducing the outer diameter of the valve guide **22** results in a relatively thin-walled valve guide. It is possible that the length of the valve guide **22** might be increased to provide effective support for the valve stem **20**. Unfortunately, increasing the length of the valve guide **22** results in more of the valve guide projecting above the engine head, which would require a deeper stamping operation to fabricate the valve stem seal retainer **28**. However, even if the length of the valve guide **22** is not increased, it is relatively difficult for the valve stem seal **26** to remain in constant contact with the outer circumference of the valve stem **20**. Moreover, it is also difficult for seal **26** to remain in constant contact with the top portion of the valve guide **22** while at the same time remaining free from interference from the valve spring **24**. As seen in FIG. **4**, the valve stem seal **26** is supported by the valve stem seal retainer **28**. Generally, when the valve guide **22** projects upwardly a relatively large amount, the valve stem seal retainer **28** includes at least two pieces, including an upper portion for fixing the valve stem seal in place and a lower portion for preventing migration of the upper portion when the valve stem **20** reciprocates during engine operation. The lower portion may also include a flange for supporting a lower end of the valve spring **24**.

According to the present invention and as shown in FIG. **4**, a one-piece steel retainer **28** is provided to both support and reinforce the valve stem seal **26**. Retainer **28** includes a lower portion **30**, an intermediate portion **32** and an upper portion **34**. Lower portion **30** is separated from intermediate portion **32** by a first transition area **36** that is located at approximately the top of valve guide **22** that serves to reduce the inner diameter of the retainer **28** between a lower diameter D_1 and an intermediate diameter D_2. First transition area **36** is preferably formed as an inwardly extending radial ledge located at approximately half the axial height of retainer **28**. An inner surface **38** of the first transition area **36** is adapted to snugly rest against an upper surface **40** of the valve guide **22**.

A second transition area **42** separates and reduces the inner diameter between intermediate portion **32** and upper portion **34** of retainer **28** from intermediate diameter D_2 to upper diameter D_3. Again, the second transition area **42** is preferably formed as a generally inwardly extending radial ledge that serves to support seal **26** in place and prevent lifting of the seal from contact with upper surface **40** of guide **22**.

The lower portion **30** of the retainer **28** further includes a radially outwardly projecting annular flange **43** that acts to locate the retainer **28** against the upper surface **44** of the cylinder head **46**. An upper surface **48** of the flange **43** acts as a seat for a lower end of the valve spring **24**. By including the flange **43** with the valve stem seal retainer **28**, the valve seal may be fabricated and installed as a single subassembly comprising the valve stem seal **26** and the valve stem seal retainer **28**. The sealing subassembly is easier to install, especially given the space constraints above the cylinder bore as described above.

Likewise, because the retainer **28** is unitary in construction, the inner diameter D_1 of the retainer **28** lower portion **30** is less than if the retainer lower portion were a separate piece. Additionally, the retainer lower portion may include a plurality of radially inwardly projecting indentations or tangs **50** that act to secure the retainer to the outer surface **52** of the valve guide **22**. The tangs **50** also act to prevent the valve seal retainer **28** from lifting or rotating as the valve reciprocates during engine operation.

As noted above, an annular, elastomeric valve stem seal **26** engages the outer circumference **54** of the valve stem **20** to provide a tight seal. A lower outer circumference **56** of seal **26** is supported by and engages an inner circumference of intermediate retainer portion **32**, while a seal upper outer circumference **58** is supported by and engages an inner circumference of the upper retainer portion **34**. An inner circumference of second transition area **42** also engages seal **26**, and prevents upward movement of the seal under high pressures.

In practice, the valve stem seal **26** includes an upper seal **60** and a lower seal **62**. The upper seal **60** includes a plurality of continuous ribs **64** defining a number of recesses **66** in the face of the seal **26**. The ribs **64** contact the outer circumference **54** of the valve stem **20** to prevent ingress of excessive amounts of lubricant, while the recesses **66** provide a reservoir of lubricant to the valve stem as well as a location for excess oil to flow.

The lower portion **62** of the valve stem seal **26** includes a frustoconical end **72** that extends axially downwardly from the upper seal to contact the upper surface **40** of the valve guide. The outer diameter of the base **74** of the frustoconical end **72** is substantially equal to or slightly larger than D_2, the inner diameter of the retainer intermediate portion **32** and is therefore greater than the inner diameter D_3 of the retainer upper portion **34**, so that the valve stem seal **26** is tightly held against the valve stem outer circumference **54**. By configuring the valve stem seal in this manner, the amount of elastomeric material needed to create effective sealing is reduced over conventional two-piece valve stem seal assemblies, thereby allowing for a seal having a reduced diameter. Moreover, when properly installed, second transition area **42** exerts a downward force on seal **26** such that end **72** maintains contact with surface **40** even when subjected to high pressures tending to lift the seal from the valve guide. Finally, the upper portion **34** of retainer **28** helps to prevent deformation of the seal **26** over its lifetime.

The combination of the above-described features therefore enables construction of a valve seal assembly for use with valve guides **22**. The shape of the valve seal retainer allows an extremely small clearance T between the lower portion **30** of the retainer **28** and the outer surface **52** of the valve guide **22**. At the same time, the flange **43** on retainer lower portion **30** provides an integral spring seat for use with a valve spring **24**. Integral flange **43** and spring **24** also cooperate to maintain the seal in position on the guide under high pressure conditions that may tend to lift the seal from the guide. The valve seal subassembly of the present invention therefore provides a more compact assembly while not compromising sealability or durability of the seal, and at the same time providing a high resistance against seal failure due to bursting.

In another embodiment shown in FIG. **5**, a one-piece steel retainer **128** is provided to both support and reinforce the valve stem seal **126**. The retainer **128** includes a lower portion **130** and an upper portion **134**. The lower portion **130** is separated from the upper portion **134** by a transition area **136**. The transition area **136** serves to reduce the inner diameter of the retainer **128** between a lower diameter D_1 and an upper diameter D_3. The transition area **136** is preferably formed as an inwardly extending radial ledge located approximately on the valve guide **22** where the diameter of the valve guide **22** is reduced from a first diameter **137** to a smaller, second diameter **139**. An inner surface **138** of the transition area **136** engages an upper surface **140** of first diameter **137** of the valve guide **22**.

The valve stem seal **126** engages the outer circumference **54** of the valve stem **20** to provide a tight seal. An outer circumference **158** of seal **126** is supported by and engages an inner circumference of the upper retainer portion **134**. The valve stem seal **126** includes an upper seal **160** and a lower seal **162**. The upper seal **160** includes a inner surface **145**, adapted to engage an upper surface **147** of the second diameter **139** of the valve guide **22**.

The lower portion **162** of the valve stem seal **126** includes a frustoconical end **172** that extends axially downwardly from the upper seal **160** to contact the upper surface **140** of the first diameter **137** of the valve guide **22**. By configuring the valve stem seal **126** in the manner shown in FIG. **5**, the amount of elastomeric material needed to create effective sealing is reduced over conventional two-piece valve stem seal assemblies, thereby allowing for a seal having a reduced diameter.

Moreover, when properly installed, transition area **136** exerts a downward force on seal **126** such that end **172** maintains contact with surface **140** even when subjected to high pressures tending to lift the seal from the valve guide. Furthermore, the upper portion **134** of retainer **128** helps to prevent deformation of the seal **126** over its lifetime. Finally, using a retainer **128** with only the lower and the upper portion, **130** and **134**, respectively, the oil metering rate of the seal **126** becomes smaller, which in turn means less deformation of the seal **126** on the downstroke of the stem.

The valve guide **22** with the stepped configuration, i.e. with the first diameter **137** and the second diameter **139**, may also be utilized in the embodiment of the retainer **28** and valve stem seal **26** shown in FIG. **4**.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention have been disclosed. A person of ordinary skill in the art would realize, however, that certain modifications would come within the teachings of this invention. Therefore, the following claims should be studied to determine the true scope and content of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An integral valve stem seal subassembly comprising:

a unitary metal annular valve seal retainer including lower, intermediate and upper annular portions, wherein the inner diameter of said upper portion is less than the inner diameter of said intermediate portion, and the inner diameter of said intermediate portion is less than the inner diameter of said lower portion; and

an annular sealing member having upper and lower seals, said sealing member engages said retainer intermediate and upper portions, said upper seal includes an inner circumferential surface for sealing engagement with an outer surface of a valve stem, said lower seal including a frustoconical end extending axially from said upper seal to contact an upper surface of a transitional portion of a valve guide.

2. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **1**, wherein said retainer lower and intermediate portions are separated by a first transition area and said retainer intermediate and upper portions are separated by a second transition area, wherein said first and second transition areas are generally inwardly extending radial ledges.

3. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **2**, wherein said retainer lower portion further includes a plurality of radially inwardly extending tangs to positively engage an outer surface of the valve guide.

4. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **3**, wherein said sealing member has an outer circumference which is supported by said retainer.

5. in a valve assembly of a heavy-duty engine, an integral valve stem seal subassembly comprising:

a unitary metal annular valve seal retainer, said retainer including lower, intermediate and upper annular portions, wherein the inner diameter of said upper portion is less than the inner diameter of said intermediate portion, and the inner diameter of said intermediate portion is less than the inner diameter of said lower portion; and

an annular sealing member having upper and lower seals and an outer circumference, said sealing member engages said retainer intermediate and upper portions such that said outer circumference of said sealing member is supported by said retainer, said upper seal including an inner circumferential surface for sealing engagement with an outer surface of a valve stem, said lower seal including a frustoconical end extending axially from said upper seal to contact an upper surface of a transitional portion of a valve guide.

6. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **5**, wherein said retainer lower and intermediate portions are separated by a first transition area and said retainer intermediate and upper portions are separated by a second transition area, wherein said first and second transition areas are generally inwardly extending radial ledges.

7. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **6**, where said retainer lower portion further includes a plurality of radially inwardly extending tangs to positively engage an outer surface of the valve guide.

8. The valve stem seal subassembly as in claim **7**, wherein said upper seal comprises a plurality of inwardly projecting ribs in sealing engagement with the valve stem outer surface, said ribs defining a plurality of recesses therebetween.

9. An integral valve stem seal subassembly, comprising:

a unitary metal annular valve seal retainer including lower and upper annular portions, wherein the inner diameter of said upper portion is less than the inner diameter of said lower portion; and

an annular sealing member having upper and lower seals, said sealing member engages said retainer upper portion, said upper seal includes an inner circumferential surface for sealing engagement with an outer surface of a valve stem, said lower seal including a frustoconical end extending axially from said upper seal to contact an upper surface of a transitional portion of a valve guide.

10. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **9**, wherein said retainer lower and upper portions are separated by a transition area, wherein said transition area is generally an inwardly extending radial ledge.

11. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **10**, wherein said retainer lower portion further includes a plurality of radially inwardly extending tangs to positively engage an outer surface of the valve guide.

12. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **11**, wherein said sealing member has an outer circumference which is supported by said retainer.

13. In a valve assembly of a heavy-duty engine, an integral valve stem seal subassembly comprising:

a unitary metal annular valve seal retainer, said retainer including lower and upper annular portions, wherein the inner diameter of said upper portion is less than the inner diameter of said lower portion; and

an annular sealing member having upper and lower seals and an outer circumference, said sealing member engages said retainer upper portion such that said outer circumference of said sealing member is supported by said retainer, said upper seal including an inner circumferential surface for sealing engagement with an outer surface of a valve stem, said lower seal including a frustoconical end extending axially from said upper seal to contact an upper surface of a transitional portion of a valve guide.

14. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **13**, wherein said lower and upper portions are separated by a transition area, wherein said transition area is generally an inwardly extending radial ledge.

15. The valve stem seal subassembly of claim **14**, where said retainer lower portion further includes a plurality of radially inwardly extending tangs to positively engage an outer surface of the valve guide.

16. The valve stem seal subassembly as in claim **15**, wherein said upper seal comprises a plurality of inwardly projecting ribs in sealing engagement with the valve stem outer surface, said ribs defining a plurality of recesses therebetween.

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